

colleagues Senator BROWN, Senator CASSIDY, and Senator CASEY. Our bill would ensure that workers who stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic and performed essential work in hazardous conditions, including our first responders and critical supply chain workers, do not have their Social Security benefits reduced for serving our country.

Semiretired workers make invaluable contributions across all sectors of our economy. Workers who retire at age 62 may collect Social Security benefits, but if these workers choose to continue working and earning income, then the retirement earnings test, or RET, will reduce the benefits they earn above a certain threshold.

I have heard from many constituents who stepped up to perform essential work during the pandemic, only to find later that the income they earned during that time unexpectedly put them above the statutory RET threshold. One of my constituents, a teacher aide at an Aroostook County elementary school, is an example of a semiretired worker who was negatively impacted by the RET. She worked extra hours delivering meals to children who were at home learning remotely from March through June of 2020, and as a result she earned more than the RET threshold and had to pay money back to the Social Security Administration. I have also heard from semiretired nurses who agreed to work extra hours as our hospitals were filled with COVID patients and part-time employees who worked overtime to produce desperately needed personal protective equipment and COVID tests. They answered the call to fulfill vital roles when many of us were locked down in the early stages of the pandemic.

Through no fault of their own, these workers' incomes surpassed the RET threshold due to overtime and hazard pay. They must now pay back thousands of dollars in benefits to the Social Security Administration or face a temporary reduction in their benefits until the money is recouped. Meanwhile, the money they earned during this time was to compensate for the exceptional work performed during the pandemic, and these semiretired essential workers did not plan or budget for a reduction in benefits or a sudden expense. Mr. President, this is profoundly unfair for those who aided us during a crisis.

The Supporting Essential Workers in Retirement Act would exempt premium pay earned by essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic from the RET. We should incentivize essential work, not discourage it. I encourage my colleagues to join us in supporting this bill to ensure that those brave individuals who performed essential work in hazardous conditions to help our country address a global pandemic are not punished for doing so.

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself, Ms. SINEMA, and Mr. KING):

S. 3665. A bill to authorize certain aliens seeking asylum to be employed

in the United States while their applications are being adjudicated; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Asylum Seeker Work Authorization Act of 2022 with my colleagues Senator SINEMA and Senator KING. This legislation would allow individuals seeking asylum to be eligible for employment authorizations starting 30 days after applying for asylum, provided their applications are not frivolous; they are not detained; and their identities have been verified, with their names run through the federal—government's terrorist watch lists. This change would allow asylum applicants to work, support themselves, and contribute to society without being as dependent on assistance from local governments while their claims are being adjudicated.

Under current law, asylum seekers must wait extended periods of time after filing their applications before they are allowed to apply for work permits. These long waiting periods were originally adopted by the Clinton administration—and then extended to a full year by the Trump administration—out of concern that some migrants might apply for asylum primarily as a means of getting a work authorization. Clearly, this change has only transferred the burden of care for these asylum seekers onto communities across the Nation.

One such community is Portland, ME. Over the span of several months, a historic surge of asylum seekers has arrived in Portland after crossing our southern border. Currently, hundreds of asylum seekers are being housed in emergency shelters by the city of Portland. These asylum seekers could give a much needed boost to Maine businesses that are facing labor shortages—our State's unemployment rate is just 4.7 percent—but the lengthy work authorization process prevents these asylum seekers from getting jobs, even to support themselves.

While the Federal Government has provided assistance to Portland and other communities around our country dealing with a surge in asylum seekers, it would be a better solution if those seeking asylum were able to join the workforce and achieve self-sufficiency as quickly as possible while awaiting the outcome of their cases.

It is my hope that the changes proposed by our bill will lessen the burden on the budgets of communities hosting asylum seekers, while allowing these individuals and their families to support themselves as they want to do, bringing needed skills to the cities and towns in which they settle. I encourage my colleagues to support it.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 4927. Mr. CRUZ submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 6617, making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending Sep-

tember 30, 2022, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4928. Mr. CRUZ submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 6617, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4929. Mr. LEE (for himself and Mr. MARSHALL) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 6617, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 4930. Mr. BRAUN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 6617, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 4927. Mr. CRUZ submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 6617, making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ PROHIBITION ON FEDERAL FUNDING OF SCHOOLS OR CHILD CARE CENTERS WITH STUDENT COVID-19 VACCINE MANDATES.

None of the funds made available under this Act or an amendment made by this Act may be provided or awarded, including by way of grant or subgrant, to any State educational agency, local educational agency, public school (including a public charter school), private or parochial school, child care center, or Head Start facility, that enforces any coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 vaccine mandate that requires a child or student under the age of 19 years to be immunized against COVID-19 as a condition of enrollment or in-person attendance at such school, center, or facility or to participate in any school-based or school-sponsored activities, including extracurricular activities.

SA 4928. Mr. CRUZ submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill H.R. 6617, making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2022, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ PROHIBITION ON FUNDING OF VACCINE MANDATES.

None of the funds made available under this Act or an amendment made by this Act may be used to implement or enforce any of the following COVID-19 vaccination mandates:

(1) The emergency temporary standard issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration on November 5, 2021, entitled "COVID-19 Vaccination and Testing; Emergency Temporary Standard" (86 Fed. Reg. 61402; relating to requiring COVID-19 vaccination with respect to employers of 100 or more employees).

(2) Executive Order 14042 of September 9, 2021 (86 Fed. Reg. 50985; relating to ensuring adequate COVID-19 safety protocols for Federal contractors), as amended before, on, or after the date of enactment of this Act.

(3) Executive Order 14043 of September 9, 2021 (86 Fed. Reg. 50989; relating to requiring COVID-19 vaccination for Federal employees), as amended before, on, or after the date of enactment of this Act.

(4) The interim final rule issued by the Department of Health and Human Services on November 5, 2021, entitled "Medicare and